

## CONNECTING WITH OUR OCEAN:

# HARP SEAL

*Pagophilus groenlandicus*, meaning "ice-lover from Greenland"



### ABOUT

Harp seals are highly migratory and live in the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, primarily near pack ice. Long Island Sound visitors reported sightings of Harp Seals from November to May.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Harp Seals can sleep with half their brain awake

As prey, pups are vulnerable to polar bears, foxes, and wolves on the ice. Adult predators in the water include killer whales and sharks.

As abundant predators, they help regulate fish and invertebrate populations. They also play a role in nutrient cycling – meaning their waste returns nutrients to the ocean, supporting the growth of plankton and algae.



**SPOTTED IN THE LONG ISLAND SOUND**



### CLIMATE CHANGE

Harp mothers rely on stable sea ice platforms to give birth and nurse their pups. Due to warming temperatures and reduced ice coverage, these platforms are becoming unstable, leading to increased pup mortality from drowning or being crushed in the ice.



**NEW HAVEN  
CLIMATE  
MOVEMENT**



## CONNECTING WITH OUR OCEAN:

# HORSESHOE CRAB

Named for the horseshoe-like shape of its broad, rounded carapace  
(the front half of its shell)

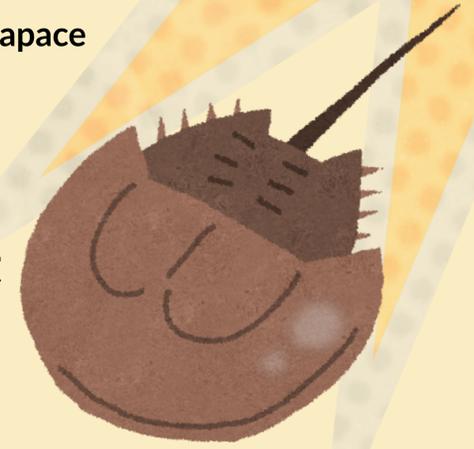
### ABOUT

Horseshoe crabs are ancient animals that have lived on Earth for over 450 million years. Even though they are called crabs, they are actually more closely related to spiders and scorpions. They live in shallow coastal waters and use their long, pointed tails to flip themselves over if they get stuck— not to sting.

Horseshoe crab's blue blood is vital in medicine. It's used to test vaccines and medical equipment to make sure they are safe for people. Because of this, horseshoe crabs help protect human health all around the world.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Horseshoe crabs are an ancient species native to the Long Island Sound, but they are currently in decline due to threats like overharvesting and habitat loss. They are considered a "keystone species" because they are a vital food source for other wildlife and are crucial for the health of the ecosystem.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Horseshoe crabs have 10 eyes, used for navigating, finding mates, and sensing light



## CONNECTING WITH OUR OCEAN:

# EELGRASS

*Zostera marina*, meaning “belt” or “ribbon” of the sea

### ABOUT

Eelgrass is a type of seagrass that grows underwater in marine environments. It's one of the only kinds of flowering plants that live fully in saltwater. Eelgrass can reproduce through flowering, pollination, and seed germination. Eelgrass typically grows to be 30-100 cm tall, and is usually 0.5-1.5 cm wide.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Eelgrass isn't seaweed; it's a flowering plant that produces seeds underwater.

Eelgrass is found in coastal areas, including estuaries, bays, and tidal flats. Besides the Long Island Sound, eelgrass is also common in the Chesapeake Bay and the Pacific Northwest. Eelgrass forms underwater meadows that provide habitat to fish, shellfish, crabs, and waterfowl. It improves water quality by trapping nutrients and particles.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Rising water temperatures can reduce eelgrass' growth, and rising sea levels will increase the water depth in its environment, limiting sunlight for photosynthesis. Increased storms and sediment runoff can bury eelgrass or make the water too murky for it to thrive. To help eelgrass thrive, it's important to engage in eelgrass-safe boating and support clean water initiatives.



SPOTTED IN THE LONG ISLAND SOUND

NEW HAVEN  
CLIMATE  
MOVEMENT



# CONNECTING WITH OUR OCEAN: HUMPBACK WHALE

*Megaptera novaeangliae*, meaning "big-winged New Englander"

## ABOUT

Humpback whales are large baleen whales that can grow up to 40–50 feet long and weigh up to 40 tons, feeding on krill and small schooling fish. These whales migrate thousands of miles each year, spending summers in cold, nutrient-rich waters to feed, and winters in warm tropical regions to breed and give birth.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Each humpback has a unique tail fluke pattern, like how humans have unique fingerprints!

Humpback whales can be found in the waters off Long Island and the surrounding Atlantic Coast during their feeding season. They help sustain ocean health by recycling nutrients through their waste and supporting plankton growth, which supports a thriving food web!

## CLIMATE CHANGE

As waters warm, prey like krill and small fish shift or decline, forcing whales to travel farther and expend more energy to feed. Altered currents and shrinking sea ice in polar feeding grounds disrupt nutrient cycles, harming whale health and reproduction. In areas like the northeastern U.S., warming seas draw humpback whales closer to shore as they follow prey, increasing risks of vessel strikes and fishing gear entanglement. Rising ocean noise from cargo ships and melting ice interferes with their communication (songs) used for mating and social bonding.



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